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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HELSINKI 000270

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TAGS: PGOV PREL OECD UN FI

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BARRETT MEETS WITH FORMER FINNISH PRESIDENT AHTISAARI

Classified By: Acting PolChief Lisa Conesa for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(SBU) Ambassador Barbara M. Barrett paid a courtesy call on former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari on June 10 at the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) office in Helsinki.

Ahtisaari told Ambassador Barrett that he feels half American, having lived in New York from the beginning of 1977 to the summer of 1991. He noted his association with the UN over the last 30 years through 5 secretary generals and many US presidents and that he is now on the boards of Silatech (established 2007) and ImagineNations.

Ambassador Barrett thanked him for his fine work in Kosovo and in Aceh before that. They then discussed Kosovo and CMI in greater detail.

¶2. (C) Kosovo: Ahtisaari compared Russian and Serbian behavior in Kosovo to that of school bullies. He mentioned that the UN Secretary General seems uneasy making moves there but that a clear handover from the UN to the EU is necessary. Ahtisaari believes that the Secretary General is under pressure from the Russians; he also did not see a current reason for the legalistic attitude the Russians and Serbs are taking about Kosovo further stating that it should have come up in 1989 instead of now.

¶3. (SBU) CMI: On his CMI venture, Ahtisaari compared some of the Swiss NGO successes worldwide and their post conflict budgets, and pondered whether egalitarian Finnish culture would accept such a large budget here. He intends to pursue strategic partnerships for his work throughout Europe and with the USG, hoping to include half a dozen of his long-standing governmental relationships (he mentioned the Nordics, Netherlands, Germany, UK). He is specifically talking to Ireland and Switzerland. He expects to start talking to the USG in due course and is finalizing a US 501(c) 3 number. He also expressed a desire to work with the OECD Development Assistance Community. Currently, the CMI is receiving more requests than they have capacity to fulfill and Ahtisaari sees no end to what they could do.

¶4. (C) Burma: Ahtisaari was asked to do a Burma report in support of the Secretary General's special envoy work. He noted that there was talk of his going to see the Generals in private with no publicity. He thought the disaster may help push them toward contact. He mentioned Sri Lanka and the Iraqi Kurds as other possible areas for work noting that the starting point is when the main actors see eye-to-eye on what should be done.

¶5. (C) Liberia: Ahtisaari said that Liberia is undergoing a basic census and currently has no identification process to support its structure. Activity is proceeding province to province. Post civil war planning for development activities requires a basic idea of who is there and that means

registrations of births and deaths. When asked how the USG might help, he mentioned small-scale financial support for activities. A conference is planned for next year surrounding women, the Liberian woman president and President Halonen are involved. He noted that if Africa has hope, it's due to women there providing leadership.

16. (C) Middle East, North Africa, Indonesia: Ahtisaari gave a read out of the inaugural Silatech Board of Trustees meeting in Doha June 1. The wife of the Emir of Qatar, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned (HH Sheikha Mozah), also the Chairperson of Silatech's Board of Trustees has seeded \$100 million, with a goal of obtaining additional contributions to reach \$1 billion toward advancing employment of young people (18-30) in the Middle Eastern and North African regions as a way to fight terrorism. They plan to train young people in the skills needed for working in the private sector, encouraging entrepreneurship, and providing funding for the transition from small to medium size businesses (medium size businesses employ additional people). Other countries involved in these initiatives include Qatar, Dubai, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria. About Indonesia and ImagineNations, he mentioned private and World Bank funding of \$350 million and the purchase of an existing bank, in which ImagineNations Group has a minor share. Ahtisaari said that while crowdfunding is good, especially for women, crowdfunding schemes do not generate employment so funding must exist to raise the scale from small to medium. He stated that the Indonesian government is excited. They are also training in Indonesia to meet Japan's futures needs;

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including worker rights and family support from the worker's perspective. He believes the Indonesian government is excited about the program. Ahtisaari briefly mentioned his board membership with EastWest Institute noting a recent idea occurred to them that people with money could choose investments and keep their principal while their interest income would fund initiatives.

17. (C) Iraq Meetings: Ahtisaari turned the topic to the innovative meetings held with Iraqis in September and again in April, with Finnish MFA sponsorship. He said that the impetus to hold the meetings came from Tufts and that he can provide the electricity and atmosphere. The logistics proved difficult; half of the participants were on travel lists and most were coming from Baghdad or Amman. He complained that "no proper facilities" exist in Baghdad and that while Amman would offer facilities, Amman is more complicated than Finland.

18. (SBU) The meeting closed with Ambassador Barrett thanking former President Ahtisaari for his ardent support of the Transatlantic relationship.

BARRETT